

Available online at [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)**ScienceDirect**

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 191 (2015) 2275 – 2279

**Procedia**  
Social and Behavioral Sciences

WCES 2014

# The Bolashak Program In Building A Democratic And Prosperous Society

Dr. Associate Professor Olga Nessipbayeva<sup>a</sup> \*<sup>a</sup>*Kazakh-British Technical University, 59 Tole bi street, Almaty city, 050000, Kazakhstan*

---

## Abstract

The objective of this paper is to consider the work of the Bolashak Program and give statistics of the main indexes of its activities. The author used the case study methodology and collected data from multiple sources. During the first years of independence, Kazakhstan was the first of the CIS countries to educate its best students at the top universities abroad. On the basis of the findings, we came to the conclusion that in Kazakhstan's transition toward a market economy and the expansion of international contacts, there is an acute need for cadres with advanced Western education, and so, it remains necessary to send the most qualified youth to study in leading educational institutions in foreign countries.

© 2015 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Selection and peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of WCES 2014

**Keywords:** Bolashak Program; Presidential Scholarship; democratic transformation.

---

## 1. Introduction

Reforming the educational system by training highly qualified professionals is always the key to making a society more progressive and democratic. Some historical examples of success stories include post-World War II Japan, Turkey, and Hong Kong. These nations have built economically and politically viable states through pursuing an active policy of learning from the most advanced educational systems in the world. The Bolashak Program is the Kazakhstani realization of this progressive idea, which highlights the importance of educating and training Kazakhstan's most talented youth at the world's best universities. The current literature on the role of academic mobility trends in the building of democratic and prosperous societies in transition economies (Altbach & Knight, 2007) does not provide much analysis of this global phenomenon in the context of Eurasia. There are only a few

---

\* Olga Nessipbayeva. Tel.: +7 705 184 66 30.

E-mail address: [Olga\\_Nessip@mail.ru](mailto:Olga_Nessip@mail.ru)

papers, all from a team of researchers from the University of Pennsylvania and Nazarbayev University, about the Bolashak program. They research the characteristics of scholarship recipients and the program's benefits (Perna, 2013). The objective of this paper is to consider the work of the Bolashak Program and give statistics of the main indexes of its activities through collecting and analyzing data about the Bolashak program. The author used the case study methodology and collected data from multiple sources, including presidential decrees and documents published by the Ministry of Education and Science, reports and data from the Center for International Programs, and interviews of current and former program administrators, representatives from the Ministry, Bolashak graduates, and articles from Kazakhstani newspapers.

## **2. Important facts about the program**

The Bolashak Program was established in 1993 by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. It was at first awarded only for bachelor degrees, but in 2005, master and PhD studies were added. In 2008, awards were also made for conducting research. Since 2011, bachelor's programs have been omitted, and the program has focused on masters and PhD programs and widened the categories of pedagogical and research internships. The program, which has been administered by the Center for International Programs since 2005 and overseen by the Ministry of Education and Science, is fully funded by the Government of Kazakhstan. The Bolashak Program is designed to train future leaders in economics, public policy, science, engineering, medicine and other key fields. The students study 87 priority majors and conduct research in 110 majors (About the "Bolashak" Scholarship, 2012). The selection criteria are selective, as the scholarship is awarded to only the best students. Upon completion of their programs, Bolashak alumni have to return to Kazakhstan to work in different Kazakhstani companies, government structures, and international organizations for a period of five years, or three years after a research internship (Ibid).

With rapid growth of the economy and certain industry sectors and active realization of the Industrial Innovative Strategy and other development programs in Kazakhstan, the Bolashak Program faces new challenges and requirements to adapt to the present-day reality. Students have already successfully completed their bachelor and master's degrees at universities such as Harvard, Cambridge, Columbia, the Sorbonne, etc. Currently they are working in various sectors of Kazakhstan's economy ("Bolashak" International Scholarship of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan). Since 2005 the Bolashak Program has been expanded with the President's decision to increase the number of grants for study abroad up to 3000 students. International partners in academic program administration include British Council, ACCELS, DAAD and CNOUS (Ibid). The Bolashak scholars are proud to make a difference and contribute to democratic transformation of their country (Bolashak: Program). Exceptionally talented young people from the different ethnicities represented in Kazakhstan and from different regions of Kazakhstan have become recipients of the Bolashak Scholarship. Among scholarship recipients there are representatives of 29 ethnicities, including Kazakhs, Russians, Tatars, Koreans, Germans, Uigurs, Ukrainians, Uzbeks, Dungans, Greeks, Ingushs, and Turks. Male and female applicants are almost equally represented in the Bolashak Program: 51% are men and 49% are women (The official website of JSC "Center for International Programs"). Geographical coverage of program placements includes the USA, the UK, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Canada, Russia, China, Australia, Italy, South Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Austria, Sweden, Switzerland, etc (Ibid). The strict selection criteria of the Bolashak students and highly competitive nature of the selection process ensure that only the best students, who represent Kazakhstan's most promising young leaders, are named Bolashak Scholars. Selection procedures are established by governmental regulations. The scholarship is awarded after three selection stages. The first stage includes a language test held by independent examination committee (usually ITP, IELTS or other language tests and an interview with foreign experts) and a psychological test. Since 2008 applicants for the Bolashak Scholarship must take the Kazakh language test. The second stage is conducted by a panel of experts, which interviews the applicants. The experts recommend a list of applicants admitted to the next stage. The Republican Commission has the final decision about which scholarships are awarded after thorough examination of applications and results of the first two stages (Ibid).

### 3. Statistics

In 2013, the International Bolashak Program celebrated its 20-years' anniversary. According to the statistics, over 20 years, 10,025 citizens of Kazakhstan have been granted the Bolashak International Scholarship, of which 6,015 graduates currently work in the country in different sectors of the Kazakh economy. Another 2,500 people are currently studying abroad in 33 countries and 200 universities (Galat, 2013, para.4). There are 105 research centers and laboratories in 24 countries available for internships. The graduates of the Bolashak Program are working in different levels of public service, and there are Bolashak alumni in the higher echelons of government. Today 60% of graduates are working in the private sector in Kazakh companies, 20% are in national companies, 15% work in state bodies and organizations and the rest, about 4-5% work in international organizations and non-governmental organizations (Koskina, 2013, para.1). The increasing number of scholars has also opened such destinations as Japan, Australia, China, Singapore, Malaysia and so on. In 2008 special quotas for certain categories of citizens were introduced, particularly rural, resulting in significant expansion of access for talented youth from the regions; for officials and academic staff; and one-year research internships (Mager, 2013, para.3). To date, the Bolashak Program has trained about 2,000 engineering-technical professionals, which are very necessary for us today. They are professionals in the fields of innovative projects, technology, metallurgy, and communications (Seksembayeva, 2013, para.5). In 2011 a complex modernization of scholarships was carried out. Firstly, the International Program removed eligibility for undergraduate programs and focused on postgraduate programs, and widened the categories of internships. On the initiative of the Minister of Industry and New Technologies, since 2011 short-term internships for engineers and technical workers have been developed in the framework of the State program of forced industrial-innovative development. They aim at retraining and advanced training of technical workers of relevant government bodies and large companies, which are included in the Industrialization Map. Another type of 12-month internship, for medical personnel, was also introduced, as a result of a new state public health program, "Salamatty Kazakstan," which must train clinical workers and managers and organizers from the medical sector. In general, the center is now mainly focused on the four main staffing areas of government programs that constitute the major focus of the country until 2020 – FIID (forcing industrial-innovative development), education, health and languages (Mager, 2013, para.5). So, we can say that the again-updated "Bolashak" makes an important contribution to the development of the country. Today, a multitude of highly educated domestic managers and professionals with advanced education has formed, more than half of whom are masters of sciences; more than a third, bachelors; 9 percent, trainees; and the rest, doctoral students, graduate students and professionals. In general, in 2013, 1,113 obtained scholarships. Of these, 514 people were in graduate programs; 15 in doctoral programs; 1 in a post-graduate program; and 583 people held internships. In 2013, the most popular specialties among scholars were the following: "Theory and methodology of education and nurture (on areas and educational levels)" - 123 people; "Economy. Finance. Accounting and auditing; Evaluation" - 87 people, "Pedagogical diagnostics, assessment and management of the quality of education" - 84 people, "Computer. Information technology and systems. Information security. Computing equipment and software" - 64 people, "State policy; Politics, Public Administration" - 63 people, "Law. International law. Competition Law" - 49 people (Meeting of the Republican Commission for training abroad). The priority list of specialties for 2014 includes 99 specialties for academic study, including 35 from the medical field, from technical fields, and 29 from humanitarian fields. At the same time, the list contains 178 specialties for internships in scientific-pedagogical, engineering-technical and medical professions (Ibid). Thus, there are 6,015 Bolashak alumni working in the real economy. These work in the following fields:

- for the forced industrialization of innovation and problem solving of the Third Industrial Revolution - 43%;
- for the successful development of the human capital of the nation - 15%;
- modernization of public administration and planning - 19%;
- for strengthening the country's national businesses and the middle class, the spirit of enterprise, initiative and pragmatism - 15%;
- for building the economy of the future - 8%. (History of the Program)

The program develops through updating education, strengthening skills, and fostering the intellectual elite. The Bolashak Program has played a big role in the development of the country, by creating new cadres for economics, education, science, public health, national culture, and art. The scholars are trained in the fields of business, international relations, law, science, and engineering. Bolashak graduates come back and implant into the Kazakh soil not only the updated professional knowledge obtained at the best universities but also the seeds of democracy

and civic education. The Bolashak academics are currently working or have worked in various Kazakhstan government and international organizations, while contributing to the democratic transformation of their country.

#### **4. Findings. Benefits and Drawbacks of the Program**

The Bolashak Program helps to ensure that highly-qualified experts come to the labor market with language skills, new experiences, and new ideas, having received high-quality and even elite education. This alone is very important for socio-economic development of the country, but this effect is not limited. Bolashak graduates bring with them models of new corporate culture and work ethic. As they start to work in the country, they slowly begin to build a relationship format that is good for improving the quality and capacity of the workforce in general. One of the key priorities of social modernization is to increase the transparency of decision-making, as well as the strengthening of social control, and Bolashak, (2012) alumni can do much in this regard, as they initially focus on this approach. And because Bolashak geography is very broad, Kazakhstan also gets benefit of this diverse international experience. Bolashak scholarship holders returning from abroad bring new approaches and new experiences, and this creates a certain "ideas fair" in the country. In addition, the "Bolashak" program is an important source for the formation of national elite - intellectual, business, and progressive intellectuals. And history shows that at all times the engine of progress, modernization of any country has been the elite. One drawback in the mechanism of the Bolashak Program that created professional imbalance has been that scholarship holders did not choose those professions that were demanded on the labor market, such as the engineering professions, preferring humanitarian specialties. And one of the biggest drawbacks of the Program was that 15% of the scholars did not return back to the country and stayed abroad. While individual reasons were different, most alumni who did not return received more profitable offers from foreign firms and companies, universities and international organizations than they could obtain at home. In 2011, the so-called target-oriented method of recruitment of fellows was introduced. The essence of it is very simple: any major employer, whether a government agency or a company, determines the particular person or group of people in its staff, and sends them to the center on the target application, which explains in what expertise and what program the employee must be trained. The program can be short-, medium- and long-term, that is, a scientific or professional internship up to a year, master's programs from a year to three years and PhD programs from three to five years. A tripartite agreement between the employer, the scholarship holder and the Center for International Programs is signed under these circumstances. According to the agreement, the center undertakes to train the student, the employer - to employ the graduate in his specialty, and scholar agrees to study well, and then come back and work in his organization. These agreements hope to ensure that all organizations plan their staffing needs, taking into account the short, medium and long term perspectives (Mager, 2012, para.7). It is hoped that this will fundamentally solve the problem of employment.

#### **5. Conclusion**

On the basis of these findings, we came to the conclusion that in Kazakhstan's transition toward a market economy and the expansion of international contacts, there is an acute need for cadres with advanced Western education, and so, it remains necessary to send the most qualified youth to study in leading educational institutions in foreign countries. Through study at eminent universities, where they have the opportunity to make acquaintance with potential members of the global elite, the people who in the future will take important decisions, Bolashak alumni build "social capital." Decision-making has many common factors around the world, and human relationships always play an important role in this process. "Bolashak" gives the opportunity for Kazakhs to accumulate this social capital, which in the future may well affect the career of many Bolashak alumni and, as a consequence, what they can do for their country. In general, Bolashak alumni are an important component of the process of modernization. I want to conclude my research with the words of President Nursultan Nazarbayev in his 2000 speech to Eurasia Economic Summit participants: "Our common agenda must begin with education. First and foremost, we must transform our population which is already educated and motivated into a work force for the future: 21st century training for the 21st century jobs. The battle for the future will be determined not by armies but by education, not by tanks but by technology, not by cannons but by computers. It is vital that we ensure that Central Asia is on the right side of history in all respects politically, economically and technologically." (Bolashak:

Program.)

## References

- About the "Bolashak" Scholarship (source - [www.edu-cip.kz](http://www.edu-cip.kz)). (2012). *The web-site of "Bolashak" students at MIT*. Retrieved from <http://bolashak.mit.edu/bolashak.php>
- Altbach, P.G. & Knight, B. (2007). The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11(290), 290 - 305. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1028315307303542>
- "Bolashak" International Scholarship of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. (2012). *The web-site of Karaganda State Technical Universit*. Retrieved from <http://www.kstu.kz/bolashak/?lang=en>
- Bolashak: Program. *Official web-site of Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan*. Retrieved from <http://www.kazakhembus.com/page/bolashak-program>
- Galat, I. (2013, November 25). More than 120 Bolashakers are finding the job. *The official website of "Vlast" newspaper*. Retrieved from [http://vlast.kz/article/bole\\_120\\_bolashakovcev\\_nahodjatsja\\_v\\_poiske\\_raboty-3600.html](http://vlast.kz/article/bole_120_bolashakovcev_nahodjatsja_v_poiske_raboty-3600.html)
- History of the Program. *The official website of JSC "Centre for International Programs"*. Retrieved from <http://www.bolashak.gov.kz/index.php/ru/o-stipendii/istoriya-razvitiya>
- Koskina, A. (2013, December 14). The portrait of Kazakhstani Bolashaker. *The website Zakon. kz*. Retrieved from <http://www.zakon.kz/4591789-portret-kazakhstanskogo-bolashakovca.html>
- Mager, Ya. (2012, April). Sayasat Nurbek: "Bolashak" Program contributes seriously into the development of the country. More than 300 program graduates work at different levels of state service. *The website of the newspaper "Kazakhstanskaya pravda"*. Retrieved from <http://kazpravda.softdeco.net/c/1333419742>
- Meeting of the Republican Commission for training abroad. *The official website of JSC "Centre for International Programs"*. Retrieved from <http://www.bolashak.gov.kz/index.php/ru/novosti/520-zasedanie-respublikanskoj-komissii-po-podgotovke-kadrov-za-rubezhom>
- Perna, L.W. (2013). The Many Contributions of the Bolashak Program to Human Capital Development. *The official website of JSC "Centre for International Programs"*. Retrieved from <http://www.bolashak.gov.kz/index.php/ru/k-20-letiyu-programmy-bolashak/mneniya-expertov/275-review-of-lora-perna/464-the-many-contributions-of-the-bolashak-program-to-human-capital-development>
- Seksembayeva, S. (2013, November 29). In the top-management of national companies 19% work of "Bolashak" Program graduates. *The website Zakon.kz*. Retrieved from <http://www.zakon.kz/4589131-v-top-menedzhmente-nackompanijj.html>
- The official website of JSC "Center for International Programs". Retrieved December, 2013 from [www.edu-cip.kz](http://www.edu-cip.kz)